News release

Minister announces consultation on Met Office structure

5 July 2005

Don Touhig MP, Under Secretary of State for Defence, today announced a 90-day period of consultation over possible changes in the organisation and structure of the Met Office.

The Met Office has a network of weather centres located in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff, Belfast and Aberdeen. Launching a consultation document about the future of weather forecasting production at these centres, Mr Touhig said: "Like all central government organisations, the Met Office has a responsibility to deliver value for money to the taxpayer, and constantly seeks more effective ways of delivering its services to customers. The consultation document is a response to this obligation."

The consultation document sets out four distinct options and the Met Office Board has recommended proceeding with one of these. This involves bringing together the production of all non-military weather forecasts at its headquarters in Exeter, Devon, as well as the partial automation of some of its services.

Mr Touhig emphasised, however, that the final decision had not been made, and that it rested with him. He said: "I have not taken a view on the matter and intend to do so only when all interested parties have had an opportunity to comment on all the options. There will be a 90-day period of full consultation. I will then make a final decision in light of all the arguments put forward."

Mr Touhig is sending the consultation document to all MPs with an interest, and it has also been passed formally to Prospect - the recognised Trade Union for Met Office staff.

View the consultation document (PDF, 82 kb)

Notes to editors:

- The Met office is a Trading Fund within the MoD. It has a turnover of around £170m and employs around 1,760 staff.
- Mr Touhig acts as the Ministerial owner of the Met Office on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence.
- The Met Office Board comprises Executive Directors from the organisation and a number of Non-Executive Directors, including the Chairman, Mr Clay Brendish. The role of the Board is to support the Ministerial owner in setting objectives for, and monitoring the performance of, the Met Office and to advise on major investment and rationalisation decisions.
- The consultation period will last until 20 October 2005.

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